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Another opportunity will soon be afforded us of recurring to this subject, if we shall have the resolution to meet it, in the great and long expected work of Mr Noah Webster. His extensive and ardent researches in philology are well known, and calculated to excite the impatient curiosity of the scholar. We shall certainly welcome all productions of this kind, which shall tend to make the English language more studied and better understood ; and we shall not feel the less grateful to the authors of them, because they labor in a vocation, which to most scholars is far from being attractive.

ART. XIII.—*Yu-Kiao-Li, ou les Deux Cousines ; Roman Chinois, traduit par M. Abel Remusat ; précédé d'une Préface où se trouve un Parallèle entre les Romans de la Chine et ceux de l'Europe. 4 vol. 12mo. Paris. 1828.*

‘You have made me bounce off my chair,’ said lady Bradshaigh in a letter to the author of Sir Charles Grandison, ‘you have made me bounce off my chair with reading that two good girls were in love with your hero, and that he was fond of both. I have such despicable notions of a divided love, that I cannot have an idea how a worthy object can entertain such a thought.’ It is so long since we indulged ourselves with a reperusal of the celebrated work in question, that we are not able to say from our own recollection how far her ladyship’s censure of the conduct of Sir Charles and his two *enamoradas* is justified by the standing rules of the code of romance, and the multiplied reports of cases illustrating it, that occupy the shelves of the circulating libraries. But if such was the horror of this sentimental person at the mere imagination of a double attachment, what would have been her astonishment and indignation, had Richardson wound up the novel, by actually marrying his pink of moral perfection to both the fair pretenders ? The least violent result of such a proceeding would doubtless have been the immediate termination of the quiet little practical romance, which her immaculate ladyship (without disparagement to the claims of good Mrs Richardson) was enacting in connexion with the ingenious bookseller. Such, however, is in fact the

catastrophe of the Chinese novel to which we are now to invite the readers attention.

The hero *Sa-Yupe*,* a young man far more learned and accomplished than Sir Charles, and not less handsome, elegant, and virtuous, after running the gantlet for the space of four volumes, through the long train of cruel fathers, cross uncles, eccentric fortune-tellers, stupid rivals, and knowing chambermaids, which, it seems, form the regular staple of an oriental as well as an occidental novel; besides passing with brilliant success several literary examinations, and making a great deal of first-rate poetry,—achievements which the heroes of our romances, and, we fear we may add, the writers of them, would probably, in most cases, decline attempting,—is finally rewarded for his merit and trouble, with the hands of the two cousins, *Houngiu*, or *Red-Jasper*, and *Lo-Mengli*, *Dream-of-a-Pear-tree*, whom he espouses on the same evening, both being by general acknowledgment among the prettiest and most amiable young women, as well as the best poetesses of the Celestial Empire. We are informed by the translator, that the work before us is not singular in this respect; and that this mode of disposing of their heroes and heroines, at the end of the story, is rather a favorite one with the Chinese laborers in this seductive department of the literary vineyard.

Richardson does not appear to have been much alarmed by lady Bradshaigh's bouncing, and is reported as having, in his answer to the letter from which we have made the above extract, thrown out hints that polygamy itself was not so bad a thing, as she seemed to suppose,—a principle more lax than we should have expected from the author of 'Pamela' and 'Clarissa,' although we have lately been surprised with something of the same kind from so exemplary a character as Milton,—and which, as we understand the matter, is vicious as a reply to her ladyship's objection, since the doublemindedness of Sir Charles must, on our view of the subject, be justified, if at all, as an exception from the general rule, and not as an example of it. However this may be, it is obvious that the question of morality does not come into view in reference to

* In this and the other Chinese words introduced in this article, the vowels express the sounds usually given to them in English; *a* as in *make*, &c.

a foreign production, which faithfully represents the manners of the country where it is written. The fault, if there be one in this respect, lies with the lawgivers and moralists rather than the poets of China.

Leaving this point, therefore, entirely out of the case, we may inquire with propriety, which of the two systems be preferable for the purpose of poetical machinery, and whether the plan of allowing two heroines to a hero, be equally judicious—considering merely the effect of the novel as a work of art—with that of confining him to one, according to the uniform and immemorial practice of the western world. It is generally admitted that the *denouement* of a story is by far the most difficult part of the fable to manage. Dryden, towards the close of his career, was reduced to such distress on this point, that he is known to have bestowed, in the bitterness of his soul, repeated imprecations on the man who invented fifth acts ; and such has been of late the great demand for new novels, that the dealers in this article are evidently reduced to their wits' ends for catastrophes. Sir Walter Scott complains loudly of the straits to which he is driven, for means to disentangle his plots ; and it must be owned that some of his productions do but too strongly corroborate the statement. If the Chinese system could be proved to be preferable to ours, or even positively valuable in itself, (and a dispensation could also be obtained on the score of morality) the generation of novel-writers would find, for a time at least, a very sensible alleviation of their present embarrassment, and would be supplied with a new and most convenient and seasonable resource for varying the tenor of their concluding chapters.

But notwithstanding our willingness to consult the accommodation of these meritorious persons, to whom we are all so much indebted for their unwearied efforts to amuse us, we cannot, in conscience, hold up to them much prospect of relief from this quarter ; and we are compelled, however reluctantly, to dissent from the opinion of the able and ingenious translator of the work before us, who is evidently inclined to believe that the introduction of the system of a plurality of heroines would have the effect of a sort of discovery in the science of novel-writing, and would tend to throw a new and agreeable light over the whole field of romance ; which, as he seems to suppose, is, in its present state, if not absolutely a place of skulls (which are far from being out of the question), rather too lib-

erally watered with tears and blood, to suit the taste of the more nervous and sensitive class of readers. We owe it to the high character of M. Abel Remusat to quote his remarks upon this point, and shall afterwards suggest, with suitable deference to his superior knowledge and judgment, our reasons for entertaining a different notion.

‘A union of three persons, cemented by a conformity of taste and character, constitutes,’ says M. Remusat, ‘in the opinion of the Chinese, the perfection of earthly happiness, a sort of ideal bliss, reserved by Heaven for peculiar favorites as a suitable reward for their talent and virtue. Looking at the subject under this point of view, their novel-writers not unfrequently arrange matters so as to secure this double felicity to their heroes at the close of the work; and a catastrophe of this kind is regarded as the most satisfactory that can be employed. Without exposing ourselves to the danger incurred by one of the German divines, who was nearly torn to pieces by the mob of Stockholm for defending polygamy, we may venture to remark, that for the mere purposes of art, this system certainly possesses very great advantages. It furnishes the novel-writer with an easy method of giving general satisfaction to all his characters, at the end of the tale, without recurring to the fatal though convenient intervention of consumption and suicide, with us the only resources, when there happens to be a heroine too many. What floods of tears would not the Chinese method have spared to the high-minded Corinna, to the interesting and poetical Clementina! From what bitter pangs would it not have relieved the irresolute Oswald, perhaps even the virtuous Grandison himself!’

Notwithstanding the plausibility of these considerations and the high authority upon which they are offered, we are satisfied that they involve a material error; which lies in confounding the interest of the novel reader and writer with that of the personages of the tale, and supposing that everything, which tends directly to promote the immediate comfort and well-being of the latter, must also redound to the advantage of the former. This idea, though in our view not only false but directly the reverse of the truth, has been entertained by others as well as M. Remusat, and in particular by the committee of blue-stocking ladies, with whom Richardson was in the habit of taking counsel, as to the conduct of his plots, while he was composing his novels. It is well known that these tender souls implored him, with tears in their eyes, to reform Lovelace and permit him to marry Clarissa. It is also

understood that Mrs Klopstock, a correspondent and kindred spirit of the womankind of Richardson, interceded powerfully with her gifted spouse, in favor of one of the fallen angels called Abaddona, who showed rather more symptoms of remorse than his fellow reprobates,—entreating that he might, by some means to her unknown, be rescued from the gulf of perdition, and after a reasonable period of purgatory reinstated in Paradise. We do not now recollect how far this intercession proved effectual with the author of the ‘Messiah’; but Richardson was deaf to all remonstrance, and manfully persisted in his original intention of killing Lovelace in a duel, and taking off Clarissa by the usual expedient of consumption. And in this he was no doubt highly judicious; the opposite theory, however amiable in itself and natural to the softer and more compassionate sex, being, as we have observed above, not only incorrect, but directly the reverse of the truth.

It is obvious, in fact, that the writer and reader of novels, far from having any community of interest with the personages, thrive on their distresses, derive consolation and entertainment from their perplexities, and are ruined (as such) by their ultimate success, since that finishes the novel, and with it, for the time being, the novel writer and reader. It would no doubt be a mighty pleasant thing to the parties to marry at the opening of the first scene or first chapter, instead of fighting their way through the five acts that make up a regular play, the four volumes that now constitute the just measure of a novel, the eight and twelve that were required by the sturdier appetites of our grandmothers, or the hundred which, as M. Remusat tells us, are not too much for the patient dames and spinsters of the Celestial Empire, where numbers of all kinds are in general upon a larger scale than with us. This, we say, would be mighty pleasant for the parties; but what, in that case, would become of the novel or the play, the very being of which results from its possessing the requisite number of acts and volumes? It would be highly convenient, again, to the parties, after the first obstacles are started, to exchange a few words of explanation, opportunities for which are constantly occurring every ten or twenty pages, and which would generally set things right at once, and remove all further difficulty; but what, in this case, would become of the rest of the work? The marriage

of the lovers must in general terminate the story ; for though Richardson has in one case filled up an additional volume, in a very entertaining way, with an account of Lady Grandison's lying in and the young heir's baby-linen, the instance is evidently an exception, and would not bear to be frequently repeated. Far from courting any such premature *eclaircissements*, it is clearly the duty of the lovers, as faithful servants of the author and the public, to keep out of each other's way, and even, if necessary, to take an oath (as there is reason to suppose they often do), that they will not come to an understanding, lest the piece should finish too soon. Why does not Zaire show her brother's letter at once to the Sultan, and thus satisfy his doubts and remove his jealousy ? For the plain reason that, in this case, he would be obliged to marry her in the middle of the third act, instead of stabbing her at the end of the fifth. Why does Romeo arrive at the tomb of the Capulets half an hour too late, and why does not the Missionary in 'Atala' ring his bell five minutes earlier ? Clearly, that the ladies may in each case have time to take their poison, without which there could be no proper catastrophe.

Far from having a community of interests with the characters of the tale, it is evident that the author and reader stand in the same relation towards them with that of a physician towards his patients, or of the spectators in ancient Rome towards a band of fighting gladiators. The physician feels a great deal of sympathy with the sufferer whom he is attending, laments his situation, and does all he can to relieve him ; but after all, if there were no disease there would be no fee for curing it, and the physician would die instead of the patient. The assembly in a Roman amphitheatre were in the highest degree interested in the desperate struggles and dying agonies of the gladiator ; but if he implored compassion, they turned their thumbs upon him at once. The danger to which he was exposed, though death to him, was to them precisely the sport they came to see ; and when he sought to escape from it, they looked upon him as a malefactor that was attempting to deprive them of a legitimate source of pleasure, and punished him as such.

In like manner we sympathize deeply with the sorrows of the heroes and heroines of romance, and it is from the exercise of this sympathy that we derive the pleasure. If they were not distressed, how could we sympathize with them ?

Remove the cause of their trouble, and they become at once indifferent to us. The case we think is quite clear against our ingenious translator. Had Oswald married Corinna when they first met, they would have returned to Scotland, passed a very comfortable life, had a house full of children, and given very elegant entertainments in the winter at Edinburgh or London ; but would they have wandered in company over the ruins of Rome ? Would the heart-broken poetess have apostrophized the moon so beautifully from the Cape of Misenum ? Who does not feel, that instead of wishing to facilitate their marriage, the author was at her wits' end to prevent it from taking place at the end of every chapter ; and that pale little Lucilla, for whom nobody cares a straw, was introduced into the work for no other earthly purpose ? If Oswald could with propriety have married both the sisters, Madame de Staël must either have invented some other mode of separating him from Corinna, or we should have lost the work.

It is obvious, therefore, that the accommodation afforded to the personages of a novel by the Chinese system of double marriages, is ruinous (as far as it operates) both to the writer and reader ; depriving the former of one of his most useful machines for creating the necessary distress, and the latter of all the pleasure, which the contemplation of the distress thus created would have afforded him. The marriage of the lovers, notwithstanding the false and sophisticated theories of this branch of literature, that obtain from time to time a temporary currency among us, is and must ever remain the only legitimate object of a true novel ; and the real difficulty of composing one (as respects the plot) consists in keeping the said lovers apart by natural and probable means, for the space of four volumes. The extent of this difficulty is easily appreciated, when we recollect that the hero and heroine are both *ex officio* endowed with all the virtues and graces that can adorn human nature, at its best estate ;—perfect beauty heightened and set off by the most unaffectedly easy and graceful manners, unspotted integrity and honor, ready wit, universal knowledge, skill in all the useful and ornamental arts, every personal quality, in short, which is fitted to engage attention, admiration, and love, with perhaps a few grains of imperfection thrown in, just to show that the being in question is not absolutely an angel in disguise. On the other hand, the subordinate characters, composing the circle in which the hero and

heroine move, are, for the purpose of contrast, degraded as much below the ordinary standard, as the others are elevated above it; and are all either absolute reprobates without a trace of any redeeming virtue, or, if in the main respectable, are encumbered with some defect, physical or moral, that necessarily fixes upon them the dislike, contempt, or pity of the reader. If honest, they are awkward, stupid, and ignorant; if tolerably handsome, polite, and accomplished, they are either arrant knaves, or else too old to be dangerous.

The lovers, in short, are the only persons who enjoy the privilege of combining youth and other accidental advantages, with a high degree of intelligence and moral excellence; and they figure in the troop that surrounds them, like the *stars* from some metropolitan theatre on a provincial stage. ‘So stately his form and so lovely her face,’ that, from their first introduction, we see they have a mutual attraction as strong as that of the needle to the pole, and that nothing but violent means can prevent them from rushing into each other’s arms at the end of the first act or chapter. These violent means must of course be resorted to by the writer, and it is upon the judicious selection and employment of them, through the five acts or the four volumes, that the merit of the plot depends. Of these there is no doubt a considerable variety;—inequality of birth or fortune; family feuds; dissensions on religion and politics among the old people; the intervention of agents either wholly or partly supernatural; finally, mere accidents, as when Oroondates is prevented from marrying Statira, because Statira makes a false step as she is getting out of the carriage at the church door, falls upon the pavement, and breaks her neck. All these resources (except perhaps the last, which however is but too often employed by the ablest hands) have their value, and are used by turns with effect and success; but all of them put together are not perhaps worth the single expedient of a rival passion.

All other difficulties are partly in the nature of accidents, and subject, though in a less degree, to the same objection. That Zaire, after getting on her wedding dress, should discover, to her great surprise and regret, that she is a Christian, while her intended husband, the Sultan, is a good Mussulman, is not much better, as a piece of poetical machinery, than the untimely slip of the foot, that proved fatal to the happiness of Statira, as mentioned above. Cases of this description are like those

actions at law that go off upon some defect in special pleading ; but when a rival passion is brought into play, it is then, and then only, that the question may be said to be fairly argued on its merits. Once secure of the affections of his mistress, the hero, even though prevented by some objection of a positive kind from marrying her immediately, pursues his way with comparative equanimity from volume to volume, in the well-founded conviction that his author will set all right in the end. The difficulty is in reality in a great measure foreign to him, since all disputes about politics, religion, property, birth, and other such matters, must after all be adjusted by the parents and guardians. The lovers sink of course into subordinate characters, and the book becomes a treatise on moral philosophy, or the history of this or that period, anything, in short, but a novel.

But let the hero once entertain a doubt of his mistress' affection, and it is easy to see that the stage must be, as it were, all on fire until he be satisfied. Then first develops itself the terrible element of jealousy with its heart-rending agonies, so intolerable to the sufferer and so diverting to the reader ; then are heard the keen encounter of wits, the contemptuous and angry defiance, the fond expostulation, the melting avowal ; then, as Prince Metternich says of the course of contemporary political affairs, the action ' plunges furiously forward like a ship in a hurricane.' Bursts of passion, floods of tears, madness, duelling, all the most violent expedients that can be used, are now legitimate, and are brought home to the persons of the main actors, who thus become the real heroes of their own adventures (instead of being, as they are in many very popular modern romances, a couple of insignificant painted waxen puppets), until the triumph of one pretender and the just despair of the other terminate the strange eventful history.

Now, the moment we admit with the Chinese the system of double marriages, this rich stock of materials for romance is irretrievably lost. If Oswald could, consistently with the law of the land and of romance, have married both Corinna and Lucilla, the work, as we said before, could not have been written, at least in its present form. Had it been regular for Grandison to espouse at once Clementina and Miss Byron, can it be supposed for a moment that either of these paragons, who appear to have had the highest respect for each other, would have objected to the arrangement? Where then had

been the volumes of high wrought sentiment and eloquent insanity, over which we now hang with such intense rapture? All exchanged for a paragraph in the newspaper, and a record in the parish register. If Charlotte, again, could with propriety have shared her affections impartially between the youthful Werther and his aged rival (and we see not why the ladies should not have as large privileges in this respect as the gentlemen, although we are not aware whether they are or are not allowed them by the customs of China), would that passionate enthusiast have thought of demanding the loan of the pistols? Would not the fair hand, that conveyed this fatal present, have probably been employed, at no very distant period, in spreading bread and butter for other children as well as those of Albert and his former wife? Where then had been the charming ‘Sorrows,’ and the ‘tears eternal,’ that will embalm the memory of poor Jerusalem, who sat for the portrait?

We are satisfied, in short, that the Chinese system (whatever may be its value in practice, a point upon which there can of course among us be but one opinion) would be decidedly injurious in its effects on polite literature, and that the amiable feelings of our ingenious translator have led him into a very grave and obvious error upon this subject. We think that we can even perceive a certain tameness resulting from this very circumstance, in the conduct of the action represented in the novel before us, to which we must now more particularly direct our attention, having already been led by the attractive nature of the inquiry to digress somewhat farther than we originally intended.

It has long been known, by the accounts of the missionaries who visited China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that the literature of that empire was extremely rich, especially in the department of poetry and romance; but the nature of the objects, which more immediately occupied the attention of these travellers, prevented them from making very deep researches into this particular subject. Their sudden and violent expulsion, and the subsequent rigorous prohibition of all intercourse with Europe, have made it impossible to prosecute these inquiries on the spot; but the missionaries had fortunately sent home, during their residence, extensive collections of the best works in all branches of learning. Of these, not less than five or six thousand, some of them very voluminous, are

preserved in the Royal Library at Paris, and have furnished M. Remusat, undoubtedly the most distinguished Chinese scholar of the present day, with ample materials for prosecuting this interesting study. To the ardent zeal and indefatigable industry which are essentially necessary to success in all difficult pursuits, this writer fortunately unites a remarkable clearness and sagacity of intellect, by which he is able to turn his materials to the best account, and the talent of communicating his discoveries in a lively and agreeable style. We already owe to him the first intelligible Chinese grammar, that has ever appeared in Europe, of which we submitted to our readers a brief notice in a former number of this journal. Should he be enabled, as we hope he will be, to continue his researches for a series of years, we anticipate results of great importance, not merely to polite literature, but to the history of the human race, of which the Chinese nations constitute so large and hitherto so entirely unexplored a branch.

The novel, of which he has now published a translation, was selected from the great number to be found in the Royal Library, from having been particularly recommended by the most intelligent of the Jesuit missionaries, as one of those that enjoyed the highest reputation in the country. The translator has prefixed to his work a long and very entertaining Preface, in which he gives an account of the general character and composition of the Chinese novels. Our readers, we think, will be gratified with the opportunity of perusing a few extracts from this curious dissertation.

‘The Chinese are entitled to the honor of having invented the domestic and historical novel several centuries before they were introduced in Europe. Fables, tales of supernatural events, and epic poems, belong to the infancy of nations; but the real novel is the product of a later period in the progress of society, when men are led to reflect upon the incidents of domestic life, the movement of the passions, the analysis of sentiment, and the conflicts of adverse interests and opinions. Fictions naturally reflect the aspect of real life, and change their character with its successive changes. The muse which inspires them was a native of woods and deserts, and at first dwelt in preference in the forest or on the seashore. It was long before she gained admittance into cities, and the Chinese nations, with some of those of modern Europe, are the only ones who have admitted her into their saloons, and allowed her to take a part in the familiar conversations, the friendly meetings, the domestic discussions, the household

diplomacy, and all the little events, that fill up the circle of private life.

‘The character of the Chinese novels is the same with that of the better parts of *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Tom Jones*, and *Cecilia*. Their authors address themselves to the reason rather than the imagination of their readers. They are less desirous of exciting emotions by bold conceptions and singular adventures, than of offering subjects for reflection, and anticipating the lessons of experience. The other Asiatic nations, led away by a passion for the marvellous, have often disfigured the most respectable traditions, and converted history itself into romance. The Chinese, on the other hand, may be said to have given their romances the truth of history. Nor are they the less entertaining, because they are not wholly destitute of common sense; as we find, in like manner, that among ourselves the most extravagant writers are often the most insipid. Man, considered in his social relations, his vices, inclinations, moral habits, and forms of intercourse, is the ordinary subject of the Chinese novels and plays. They are thus kept within the sphere of real life. The imagination of their writers does not overstep the limits of the world around them. We are not therefore to expect from them the sort of amusement, that we derive from the Arabian Tales or the Hindoo poems. They are perhaps less fitted to amuse children, but are certainly more interesting to mature minds. The scene is laid on the earth we inhabit, and not at the bottom of the sea, on the tops of enchanted hills, or in imaginary regions in the air. We meet with no princes fighting with giants, no princesses carried off by genii, no talismans, no metamorphoses. The personages are men and women acting upon the ordinary motives of feeling and interest,—love, ambition, disinterestedness, or selfishness. Good faith contends with intrigue, honest men carry on the war with rogues, as in real life. With a few changes of names these fictions might pass with us for accounts of real events, occurring in our neighborhood; and nothing can be more similar to Nankin and Canton, than Paris and Westminster. The Chinese novels have also the merit, that their authors are not excessively prejudiced in favor of their own country. They manage the weapon of satire with a good deal of address, not so much in the caustic and pointed style of *Gil Blas* and *Gulliver*, as in that of the better English novels, where the lesson results indirectly from a correct delineation of vice and its consequences. They excel in details, and may be compared in this respect to Richardson and Fielding, or at least to Smollet and Miss Burney. By this means they acquire a high degree of truth and interest, and produce a very strong illusion.’

It is impossible not to be satisfied by these remarks (which carry internal proof of their correctness, in the talent and discrimination with which they are written), that the true plan of the domestic novel has been brought long ago to the same perfection in China, as it has very recently in modern Europe ; and as, in all the departments of art, the power of execution commonly precedes the discovery of correct methods, we may conclude that the Chinese possess, in their vast collections of polite literature (which are represented as infinitely more extensive than ours), many works equal in merit to the best of which we can boast, although their effect upon us can of course never be precisely the same. The high value of these collections, considered merely as illustrations of the state of civilization, is sufficiently obvious, and is dwelt upon at considerable length by our author. Passing over this part of the Preface as less material to our immediate purpose, we come to some further accounts of the subjects generally treated in these compositions.

‘ Every nation has its particular habits and modes of thinking, which are necessarily described under some varieties of detail in its novels, and give a distinct form to the common fund of incidents which lie at the bottom of all fictitious narrations. In China, the hero of a romance is commonly a young scholar of an excellent disposition, exclusively devoted to the study of the classic authors, and amusing himself in the intervals of leisure with flowers, wine, and poetry. It is not necessary that there should be any thing chivalrous about his habits or character ; and provided he excels in writing poetry, it is of little consequence whether he be or be not a fearless and graceful horseman. Nor is it required, as with us, that he should possess a large fortune ; for in the favored regions of the Celestial Empire, learning and talent are infallible passports to the loftiest heights of wealth and honor. This is no doubt partly true in fact, since it is received as a principle in all novels, just as it is with us, that a man obtains political advancement by good faith, disinterestedness, and regard for the public good. The incidents habitually employed by writers of different nations, are also extremely various. In the Greek novels, we commonly find a pair of lovers torn asunder, at the moment of their marriage, by a band of pirates, and brought together again by some lucky chance, after suffering a tedious captivity and giving proofs of supernatural courage and virtue. The basis of the French moral tales is gallantry. In Spain, the heroes of romance were long in the habit of rescuing their mistresses from the fury of some mad bull, or the perils of shipwreck. In England, insurrections and conspiracies

were for a time the order of the day ; but they have lately given way to elopements and clandestine marriages, convenient though hazardous methods of eluding the obstacles, which avaricious guardians too often oppose to the establishment of rich and beautiful heiresses.

‘In China, the two predominant ideas in the world of fiction, as in that of real life, are *promotion* and *marriage*. Every man of any note is constantly occupied, either in distinguishing himself at the literary examinations, or in obtaining a domestic establishment for himself or his children. Marriage is indeed everywhere the most important of all important objects, since it is the basis of all the social relations; and it is particularly interesting to the Chinese, for the additional reason, that they consider it of great consequence, that funeral honors should be rendered to them after their death, at certain stated times in the year, by their male descendants. To marry and to have male issue are therefore matters of the first necessity, with the Chinese of all conditions. *Promotion* is an object which concerns none but the men of letters ; but as these are the only persons of distinction in the empire, the subject is frequently alluded to in literary works. All the Chinese, without distinction of birth, are allowed to present themselves, every year, for literary examination, in their native city, and every three years in the capital of their province. Those who distinguish themselves at the annual examination, receive a literary title or degree (like that of *Bachelor of Arts* at our universities) ; but in order to derive any benefit from it, they must be annually examined anew for the ten following years. In the mean time they may appear at the provincial examinations, where those who distinguish themselves obtain a higher title, like that of *Master of Arts* with us ; and finally, at the general examination, held in the capital of the empire, and under the eyes of the sovereign, where the highest literary dignity, or *doctorate*, is conferred upon the successful competitors.

‘All political appointments are regularly made from the persons who acquit themselves with honor at these examinations, it being a received and established principle in China, that talents and merit are the only proper qualifications for public offices. Accordingly all the young men who can read, are constantly engaged in preparing for these examinations. The periods when they are to be held are fixed beforehand, and the measures adopted by the government upon the occasion, excite universal attention. Crowds of spectators assemble to witness these combats of talent and learning ; as was formerly the case in France, at the public disputations before the Sorbonne and the University. Fame and fortune depend upon the issue, which is proclaimed with pomp, and becomes the universal subject of conversation. Superiority

in wit and learning thus possesses an importance, corresponding with that of political zeal and orthodoxy at our elections. Numerous modes of expression, both in the familiar and elevated style of the language, allude to these examinations; and they are of course very often employed in the machinery of fictitious writing. Thus, in the work before us, the hand of one of the heroines is offered by her father, as a prize, to the competitor who shall produce the best piece of poetry.'

We may remark *en passant*, that this account of the method of obtaining political advancement in China, though familiar to those who are acquainted with the descriptions given of this empire by the Catholic missionaries, may probably appear both new and curious to the general reader. It gives us a much more favorable idea of the Chinese form of government, than would naturally be derived from the accounts of the persons attached to the recent British embassies of Lords Macartney and Amherst. These writers, with the sagacity and candor which so many British travellers have extended to our country, have been pleased to represent the cudgel as the only element of political or civil power employed among the Chinese; who, on this supposition, would be, what Sir Francis Burdett has so often, in his place in the House of Commons, declared his countrymen to be in reality, a *flogged nation*. One of these narratives contains, in substance, the following sentence, which we quote from memory, and perhaps with some slight inaccuracy of expression. 'Every day through the year, and in every dwelling from the palace to the cottage, the cudgel is constantly going from morning till night, from one end of this vast empire to the other.' Without entering *au fond* into the question of the extent of this supposed cudgel-playing (the British accounts of which would, we shrewdly suspect, be found upon a level in point of correctness with those of the gouging in our Western country, and of Mr Clay's razor-strap made from the skin of Tecumseh), we may remark, that in the four volumes before us, which bring into view in succession the manners of all classes of society, there is not, as far as we recollect, a single allusion to the cudgel.

As respects the political institutions of the empire, it appears from the above extract, and from the more ample information to the same effect contained in the works of the missionaries, that, although entirely different from any of those that are established in the Western world, they will perhaps bear a comparison

with the best of them. The great problem in government is to reconcile the liberty of the people with a tranquil, wise, and vigorous administration of their common concerns; and experience seems to show, that it can only be solved by providing for a large, regular, and frequent intervention of the body of the community in the conduct of the government. The existence of such an intervention forms the substance of what we consider the great modern improvements in political science, as exemplified in the representative constitutions of Europe, and especially of these United States. This intervention is effected in our system, by securing to a certain number of the citizens the right of designating the public functionaries. The same intervention appears to exist in China to an extent at least as great as with us, and far greater than in any other Christian community; but to be managed on the different principle of securing to every citizen the right of exhibiting his qualifications for filling public offices before a competent tribunal, and the possession of any office for which he can prove himself to be qualified. It is evident that both these methods provide for bringing into activity the whole talent, knowledge, and virtue of the community, and prevent the stagnation and exhaustion that regularly take place, when the power is monopolized by one or more privileged families.

To decide which of the two systems is, on the whole, preferable in its operation, and which is least liable to abuse, is of course beyond the scope of the present cursory notice. Each has, doubtless, its peculiar advantages and defects. While we are naturally inclined, by our national prejudices, to assign to our own form of government, the superiority over every other, we may perhaps be permitted, as humble laborers in the field of letters, to look with some degree of complacency upon a constitution, which makes literary distinction the only title to advancement, and thus realizes the latter part of the famous alternative proposed by Plato, as the *sine quâ non* of a wise administration of government, that kings should become philosophers or philosophers be made kings. Had this system been proposed in any abstract treatise on civil polity, we incline to think, that it would have been generally viewed as the most beautiful theory that had ever been invented, but as a wholly impracticable and visionary one. A longer experience, than any other form of government has ever been subjected to, has satisfactorily proved that it *works well*. While we

are among those who profess to entertain the most sanguine expectations as to the prospects of our own country, we should be glad to feel perfectly certain, that our institutions would stand the test of a thousand years' trial, as well as those of China have done already. Both are no doubt susceptible of abuse in various ways ; but it must be recollected, that the security against the abuse of any political institution, does not lie so much in the form and character of the institution itself, as in the condition of the society in which it is established ; just as, in private life, our security against being deceived and defrauded by our agents, does not depend so much upon the precise form in which their powers of attorney are drafted (although this be a point of some importance), as on our own capacity for choosing them well, and on the substantial means we possess of subsequently rewarding or punishing them, according to their deserts.

We would willingly enlarge somewhat farther upon this interesting subject, but are compelled by want of room to adjourn our remarks to some future occasion ; and must now hasten to lay before our readers a more particular account of the adventures of *Red-Jasper* and *Dream-of-a-Pear-tree*. The concluding part of the translator's Preface contains some observations on the style of the work, and on the principles by which he has been governed in the translation. It has been made a question, whether titles of honor and address should be retained as in the original, or rendered by such terms, as, according to our usages, correspond most nearly with them. M. Remusat has, judiciously we think, adopted the latter plan, and has in general given his style a more easy and natural air, than could have been expected, considering the great difference in the genius of the two languages ; while he has, as he assures us, maintained throughout, on all essential matters, a scrupulous fidelity to the text. Omitting any further notice of these particulars, which, however, will be found highly interesting to the philological inquirer, we shall now proceed to lay before our readers a rapid sketch of the fable, interspersed with occasional extracts, as specimens of the manner ; and shall add, if our limits admit, a few hasty suggestions respecting the state of morals and manners indicated in the work.

The opening of the first chapter introduces us into the interior of the family of *Pa-Huan*, one of the nine principal masters of ceremonies ; who has just received a present of twelve

flower-pots, containing China asters in full bloom, and has placed them in his library among a large collection of roses, amaranths, orchises, and other flowers, all in pots of fine porcelain, perfuming the air with their odors, and covering the balustrades and trellises with their foliage. Pa is engaged in admiring his new acquisition, in company with two of his friends, *Gu-Kuay*, a member of the imperial academy of sciences, which is also one of the highest political corporations of the country, and *Sa-Yuan*, one of the inspectors general of the empire. It is easy to see that we are brought at once into the midst of the highest circles of dignity and fashion. The three friends, after sufficiently admiring their flowers, sit down to drink and make poetry; selecting for their subject these same China asters, in which they all take so much interest. It appears singular to us to see three grave magistrates wholly engrossed with a few flowers. Our political dignitaries, as M. Remusat justly remarks, have other things to think of; but such appear to be the habits of this empire. Flowers, wine, and poetry are in a manner the staple of the work before us, which wears throughout a gay and Anacreontic coloring; always kept, however, within the limit of perfect decorum, excepting that the heroes now and then take a cup too much.

While the three friends are dipping their hair pencils in their Indian ink, the servants announce the visit of *Yang-Tingchào*, another of the inspectors general, and the villain of the plot; but a villain of a very decent and respectable class, and in fact not a whit worse than any common rogue in real high life; although he be, like all doubtful characters in a Chinese novel, a very indifferent poet, and, as it seems, no great amateur of flowers, for instead of joining the rest in admiring Pa's present, he immediately falls to talking politics. He is taken to task for this by the others, and sentenced to drink a large glass of wine of about the size of a small tea-cup, but equal to ten ordinary glasses, which it seems hold about a spoonful each. It is then agreed, that the subject of politics shall not be mentioned, and that whoever breaks this rule shall drink a bumper by way of punishment. The three friends now invite Yang to join them in making poetry, to which he demurs on the score of incapacity. A good deal of conversation ensues between Yang and Pa, not always in a very friendly tone, and intermixed with sundry bumpers on both sides, by the effect of which Pa becomes a little confused, and retires behind a screen to take a

siesta. In the mean time, one of the servants, who had been in attendance, steals out and informs Hougü, or Red-Jasper, the only daughter and housekeeper of Pa, of what is going on in the library.

This lady, who, as the reader is aware, is the principal heroine of the plot, though a young beauty of sixteen, is equal to the first doctors in the empire for learning and poetical talent. Hearing that her father is *hors de combat*, she immediately seizes her pencil, and writes a piece of poetry, which she gives to the servant, with an order to deliver it to his master when he awakes. Pa, after sleeping half an hour, rouses himself and calls for a cup of tea. When he has drunk this, the servant hands him the verses of his young mistress, which Pa upon reading finds to his taste, and returning to the company, produces in the first instance as his own. This leads to much astonishment on the part of the others ; but Gu who is brother-in-law to Pa, and familiar with his niece's handwriting, soon recognises it, and discovers the trick, which Pa good humoredly avows. They all then unite in extolling the extraordinary talent and beauty of the young lady, and dwelling upon the necessity of procuring her an immediate establishment. Pa now calls for the poems of the others, but Sa, declining to enter into competition with this masterpiece, proposes that they should drink three large cups each, by way of fine, and say no more about it. Yang, who is wholly incapable of producing so much as a single couplet, seconds the motion ; and Gu, although he has nearly finished his piece, consents, that he may not be singular. They accordingly drink their three bumpers each, and continue to amuse themselves with drinking and conversation, until the lanterns are lighted and the company disperse. It is evident that the hours of assembling and separating, observed by the fashionable world in China, are of what we should consider a very patriarchal kind. Whether they are less convenient than ours, is perhaps a different question. The poetical masterpiece here alluded to, may serve as a specimen of the verses which are frequently introduced in the course of the narrative, and which regularly adorn the opening of every chapter, as in a Waverley novel. It may be thus translated ;

‘ Charming mixture of purple, white, scarlet, and gold !

‘ What divinity produces you at the return of autumn ?

‘ Through the trellis, where we thought to see only the faces

of venerable sages, you appear in your beauty like a young maiden at her lattice.

‘The quiet, the freedom, so dear to me at all times, and which I enjoy in this cool retreat, place me, as it were, in another world; but cares of state leave me very little leisure to taste these pleasures.

‘Sweet flowers! oh that I could pass my days in lolling on a couch, and inhaling your delightful odor!’

Red-Jasper’s notion of happiness seems to have been much like that of the poet Gray, who, in one of his letters, represents it as the *idéal* of Paradise, to lie all day upon a sofa, and read eternal novels of Marivaux, and we will not say what other author, out of tenderness for the reputation of the divine minstrel of the Churchyard and Eton College.

Such, however, is a brief sketch of the contents of the first chapter, which throws of itself more light upon the manners of the Chinese of rank and fortune, than all the recent books of travels put together. It also serves as the groundwork of the plot. Yang, excited by the flattering accounts given of the merit and beauty of Pa’s daughter, forms a plan of bringing about a marriage between her and his son, a youth, as it afterwards appears, of small literary pretensions, and who obtained, at the annual examination in his native city, only the sixty-third place in the third class. Yang, however, contrives by a little manœuvring, to have his son’s character represented in a favorable light to Pa, and solicits for him the hand of the fair poetess. By way of putting his merit to the test, Gu gives a dinner, to which they are all invited, and when the cloth is removed, proposes to the company to make extempore verses. By great good luck the youth acquits himself once or twice somewhat better than might have been anticipated; but is finally detected in an unequivocal false quantity, which decides the matter against him. Yang takes offence at the rejection of his son’s pretensions; and with a view at once of revenging himself upon Pa, and of endeavoring to get the decision reversed, employs his influence at court, to have the latter appointed on an embassy, which is to be sent off with a message to the emperor, who was, it seems, at this time a prisoner in the Tartar camp, the empire being under the administration of a regent. From the manner in which this appointment is spoken of, it would seem that the diplomatic line is not a favorite department of the public service among the Chinese. All his

friends join in condoling with the unfortunate master of ceremonies upon the occasion; and Yang, as a great mark of favor, offers to get the nomination recalled, if Pa will consent to the marriage. The latter, however, firmly rejects this proposal; and putting a good face upon the matter, expresses his perfect readiness to sacrifice his repose, and, if necessary, his life to the public good, adding that he is not without hope, that he shall be able to procure the emperor's release.

Under these agreeable impressions, he proposes to set off, but finds at the last moment that Yang (who seems to be all-powerful at court) has had him placed in a subaltern rank in the embassy, instead of at the head of it, according to the first arrangement; his case being similar to that of one of our citizens, who, after being appointed Minister Plenipotentiary, should be commissioned as Secretary of Legation. This commutation is of course not very agreeable to Pa, more especially as it deprives him of the power of rendering any considerable service. According to our occidental etiquette, it would have been viewed by most persons as a proper occasion for retiring from public life. Pa, however, sacrifices all scruples to his zeal for the welfare of the empire, proceeds manfully upon his mission, and after a prosperous journey returns without accident, somewhere about the middle of the second volume. In the mean time, in order to secure his daughter against the intrigues of Yang during his absence, he entrusts her to the protection of her uncle Gu, who retires with her from the capital, and after a journey of about a month (steamboats and stage-coaches being probably not in use in the Celestial Empire), arrives at the city of Nankin, where he establishes his residence.

The chief object of Gu, as the young lady's guardian, is to find a suitable match for her; and he makes use of every effort to settle this important affair at once, in order to surprise his friend Pa with a son-in-law upon his return from Tartary. Constantly intent upon his purpose, Gu remarks in one of his promenades in a favorite pleasure garden, near the city, a poem of extraordinary merit, inscribed upon the wall of a summer-house, and signed *Sa-Yupe of Nankin*. This person turns out to be a nephew of the inspector general Sa-Yuan, with whom we made acquaintance in the first chapter, and is the hero of the story. Perceiving that the ink with which the poem is written is still fresh, Gu concludes that the author must

be in the garden or its neighborhood. After some search, he succeeds in getting a sight of him, and is so much pleased with his personal appearance, that he immediately fixes upon him as the future spouse of his niece. Proceeding, however, with due circumspection, he makes inquiries respecting the young man's character and situation, and ascertains that he is an orphan of about twenty years of age, without fortune, and a stranger at Nankin, where he is residing as a student at the college. This union of circumstances would not perhaps be regarded in our more interested western regions, as constituting a remarkably advantageous *parti* for a young, beautiful, and wealthy heiress of the highest rank; but they manage these things more liberally in China. 'The satisfaction of Gu,' says our author, 'was complete, when he heard this report. "Since the youth is poor and unmarried," said he to himself, "there can be no difficulty. He has no parents, I have full powers from Pa, the affair shall be settled at once."' It only remains to obtain a full assurance of the qualifications of the bridegroom, by ascertaining the precise extent of his literary talent. Luckily the annual examination comes on just at this moment. As soon as it is over, Gu sends for the printed catalogue of the names of the successful candidates, and finds that of Sa-Yupe, as may well be supposed, at the head. This decisive fact removes all doubts, and Gu determines at once to offer him the hand of Red-Jasper.

The hero and principal heroine are thus fairly brought into presence (as nearly at least as they can be in China, where a man is not allowed to see his wife before the wedding) at the close of the first volume. Adorned, as they both are, with every grace, talent, virtue, and beauty, or, in the Chinese phrase, *all gold and jasper*, moving like superior beings, and without rivals, in the midst of their respective circles of wondering worshippers, they possess of course an irresistible attraction for each other, and (as we observed above of their *pareils* in general) would infallibly, if permitted, rush into each other's arms at the first interview. The problem with the author, upon the manner of solving which the interest of the plot depends, is to contrive the means of keeping them asunder through the other three volumes. This is effected by a series of difficulties, which resolve themselves too often into mere accidents, and belong of course to the lowest order of poetical machinery, unhappily the one most frequently employed

even by the best hands in all countries. Some springs of a finer material are, however, from time to time put in motion ; and the intrigue is on the whole not badly managed, when judged by comparison, not with ideal rules, but with good specimens of the European school of romance. We shall briefly notice the principal occurrences that successively obstruct the happiness of the lovers, some or, indeed, all of which illustrate very curiously the manners of the country.

The first is an unfortunate *qui pro quo*, by the effect of which the hero mistakes another person for the heroine, and is induced to form an unfavorable opinion of her appearance. Gu, having made up his mind in favor of the connexion, employs the services of a lady belonging to the respectable profession of *matchmakers*, to carry the proposition to the fortunate bachelor. The business of conducting the negotiations preliminary to a matrimonial alliance, has, it seems, become in China, as might perhaps have been expected from the established customs in regard to the intercourse between the sexes, a distinct and acknowledged occupation ; which, from their superior tact in the management of these matters, naturally falls into the hands of the ladies. Madam *Chang*, an experienced matchmaker of high reputation, is therefore despatched to sound young Sa. The latter is agreeably struck with the proposal, but with more delicacy than is usual among his countrymen, positively insists on seeing the bride before he gives a decisive answer. A formal interview is of course out of the question ; but our convenient ambassadress, whose profession it is to remove difficulties, points out to the curious lover a place where he may probably get a sight of his mistress, as she sits at the window of a pavilion in her uncle's garden.

Now it so happens that Gu has a daughter, and that this daughter belongs to the unfortunate category of foils and rivals, a class of characters, who are sometimes, though rarely, honest, but, we may boldly say, never handsome. Gu's daughter is so far from being an exception to the rule, that her very name, *Wouyan*, or *No-Beauty*, indicates but too well the defects in her appearance. As ill luck would have it, no sooner has our hero taken his post of observation, than No-Beauty puts her head out of the pavilion window to look at a flight of swallows. A man of ordinary judgment would have taken care to ascertain that he had seen the right person ; but Sa, with the precipitation

and wrong-headedness natural to a hero of romance, however in all other respects perfect, does not once conceive that there can be any mistake, and decides irrevocably against the marriage. In vain does the disappointed matchmaker enlarge upon the merit and beauty of the heroine and the advantages of the alliance. All her efforts prove unavailing, and she is compelled at last to give up the point in despair. Gu, on hearing her report, is so much nettled at the perversity of his *protégé*, that he determines to be revenged upon him, and for this purpose makes interest with the examining officer of the city, an old college companion of his own, to obtain a revocation of the degree that has just been conferred upon the young poet. Being, however, naturally a good-humored old gentleman, he afterwards repents of his severity, and gets the title restored. The tractability here attributed to the examining officer may serve to show, that the Chinese system of political advancement, however beautiful in theory, is, like all other human institutions, susceptible of abuse, and affords opportunity for intrigues and evasions not less barefaced than those, which result from the *borough-mongering* of the mother country, or the *caucussing* of ours.

Such, however, is the nature of the first obstacle to the union of the lovers, which, though it shows no great richness of invention, is treated pleasantly enough in the details, and carries us on smoothly some distance into the second volume. The next difficulty is of a more complicated kind, and the exposition of it occupies a much larger space in the work, since the hero is not fairly clear of it till the middle of the third volume. It forms indeed the main knot of the story, and results from the efforts of a stupid rival to appropriate to himself by a series of devices the merit of Sa's poems, and thus eclipse him in the affections of the heroine (which are of course graduated exactly by the scale of the respective poetical talents of her suitors), and secure her hand. We can only indicate in a general way the leading points of this intrigue, which involves a great variety of details, and gives occasion to a number of Sa's finest productions. The outline is briefly as follows.

After rejecting the abovementioned overture, Sa receives an invitation to reside with his uncle, our old acquaintance the inspector general of the first chapter, who is about to pass through Nankin in one of the canal boats, and fixes a place

where he will take his nephew on board. Sa sets off accordingly to join him, but meets with an accident that interrupts his journey, and obliges him to take up his lodging for the night in a convent. The next morning, as he is walking about the neighborhood, he falls in with a party of young men in a summer-house, who are engaged in the usual occupation of writing poetry. This time, however, they are not doing it for mere amusement, but for the purpose of establishing their respective pretensions to the hand of a young lady in the neighborhood, who turns out to be no other than our fair friend Red-Jasper. Pa had, it seems, in the interim returned from Tartary; and learning the failure of the attempt on Sa, he resorts, for the purpose of marrying his daughter, to the expedient of offering her hand as a prize to the person who shall produce the best piece of poetry upon a subject assigned, which is *The Willow-tree in Spring*. Sa, being informed of these particulars, and not aware that the lady in question is precisely the one, whose hand he had already rejected when she was proposed to him as the daughter of Gu, tries his skill on the spot, and produces of course a poem that excites the admiration of the party. They all send their respective productions, carefully signed and sealed, to Pa's house; but one of the others, yclept *Chang-Fanju*, contrives, by bribing the porter, to suppress Sa's letter, and pass off the piece as his own. The poem gives so much satisfaction to the young lady and her father, that the supposed author is invited to take up his residence at the house on probation for a year, during which time he is to act as tutor to a young son.

In this situation Chang, who is wholly incapable himself of writing a decent stanza, adroitly keeps Sa about him, and repeatedly makes use of his talent to maintain the reputation he had already acquired, always passing off the productions of his rival as his own, in particular a superb ode to a pear-tree, which was considered in the family as quite a masterpiece. We may remark *en passant* that the Chinese poets seem to select their subjects, in preference, from the vegetable kingdom; and that among the various sorts of plants the pear-tree is not the least favorite. In this way, however, Chang, though a coarse and ill-favored, as well as an exclusively prosaic character, acquires much credit in the house, and seems to be in a fair way to carry off the prize. At length Sa, by good luck, and the help of a pretty but knowing chambermaid, in a green

gauze robe, with red crape sleeves, called *Yanson*, succeeds in discovering the trick that has been put upon him, and proving to the satisfaction of the young lady, that he is the author of his own poems. After putting his talent to one more test by imposing upon him a difficult acrostic, as a final trial of his skill in poetry, of which he acquits himself as usual, Jasper, overcome by so many proofs of a real talent for all sorts of versification, finally gives her consent that he should apply to her father for her hand. These communications are managed through the medium of the *soubrette*. Sa pleads hard, not for a personal interview, the possibility of which does not occur to him even in imagination, but for an opportunity of seeing his mistress at a distance in profile. Such however is the strictness of the Chinese manners in this particular, that even for this, according to our usages, somewhat modest request, he is taken severely to task by the very chambermaid.

“It is growing late,” says Sa, at the close of one of his conversations with this person, “and I must take my leave. Could not I, however, under favor of the darkness, and while there is no one here, obtain a glimpse of your young mistress, were it only in profile?”

“A strange proposal this,” replied Yanson. “Let me tell you, sir, that my young lady is a person whose virtue is equal to her wit; and that she is governed in all her actions by the strictest rules of propriety. The affair in which she is now engaged is the most important of her life, and she cannot be blamed for endeavoring to obtain a husband worthy of her. But your request, sir, seems to show that your morals do not correspond with your talent. If I were to make it known to my mistress, she would despise you for it, and reject your suit without hesitation.”

Thus severely reprimanded by our stern moralist in red crape sleeves and a green gauze petticoat, and being now more tractable, it seems, in taking a lady's charms on credit, than on the former occasion, Sa is fain to give the matter up, and begs a thousand pardons for his indiscretion. Even these indirect communications are considered too irregular to be made known to the old gentleman Pa; and it is agreed between the lovers that Sa, without alluding to anything that has passed, shall apply to the father through the intervention of the uncle Gu. A matrimonial negotiation must always be conducted through a third person. For this purpose Sa sets off immediately for Peking, whither Gu had in the mean time returned. In conse-

quence of his absence, Chang, now left entirely to his own resources, is soon unmasked by the father, brought to a decisive trial, from which it appears that he cannot write a passable couplet, 'were it his neck-verse at Hairibee,' and being thus plucked of the borrowed feathers, in which he has hitherto plumed himself, is dismissed ignominiously from the house.

Such is the solution of the second principal difficulty which obstructs the happiness of the lovers, and which carries us forward, as we have already remarked, to the middle of the third volume. From this point the current of the action proceeds with comparative smoothness, though not wholly free from shoals and rapids, the nature of which we have not room to describe in detail. The leading object of the last volume and a half is not so much to create and remove new obstructions to the marriage of the principal parties, as to bring forward the second heroine, *Dream-of-a-Pear-tree*, whose introduction is effected in the following manner.

After taking leave of his mistress in the manner above described, our hero sets off for the capital of the empire, where he expects to find uncle Gu. He gets on for some time prosperously enough; but at length falls in with a band of robbers, and is stripped of every ounce of silver that he has about him. In this embarrassing situation he has recourse to his talent for poetry to recruit his finances, or in the more popular phrase, 'to raise the wind.' It is observed by Voltaire, in reference to the great Frederic, that there is always some hope of a king who can write verses; and it appears from the present example, that the rule may be extended to private citizens, at least in China. It so happens that a magistrate named *Li*, residing at the village where the robbery takes place, is preparing a large screen in four parts, as a present for his superior officer; and having already adorned each part with a painting, wants nothing but the appropriate poetical inscriptions to complete his plan. The province of Canton, where the scene is now laid, is, it seems, not so dear to the Muses, as some others, particularly that of Nankin; and *Li* no sooner hears that there is a Nankin poet in town, than he invites him to his house for the purpose of putting his talent in requisition. *Sa* writes the four inscriptions at a sitting, for on this as on all other occasions he (and the case is the same with all the other poets that are mentioned) produces poetry of the first order with a facility only paralleled by that of the Scotts, the Southeys,

the Byrons, and the Bowrings of our time. Whenever they take the pencil in hand, the author is careful to mention the expedition with which they work ; and seems to be at a loss for words and images sufficiently strong to give a complete notion of it. Thus, in the present instance, his enthusiasm at the rapidity with which his hero wrote the inscriptions, transports him above the regions of plain prose into the following *quatrain* ;

‘ The movement of his hand was not slow like that of a pedestrian,

‘ But as rapid as the course of the swiftest steed.

‘ He starts off and checks his flight with the lightness of a winged spirit ;

‘ His thoughts cover the paper as the fleecy clouds spread themselves over the sky.’

In the same way, when he sits down on a previous occasion, by order of his mistress, to write the acrostic which is to decide his fate, notwithstanding the delicacy of the situation, he loses nothing of the freedom of thought and expression.

‘ Pearls and diamonds,’ says the author, ‘ flew about the paper like drops of rain in an April shower.’

So when the heroine produces the little *chef-d’œuvre*, which we quoted from the first chapter,

‘ Thoughts drop from her pencil, like rain from a dark summer cloud ; and spring up under her rapid hand in seven-fold clusters of flowers, till the whole paper becomes, as it were, a chain of pearls and diamonds.’

It must be owned that the Chinese poets, like the Vicar of Wakefield’s painter, are not sparing of their jewelry. A slow manner of composing, on the other hand, is the invariable accompaniment of dulness. Thus Pa, after bringing Chang and another stupid pretender to the *experimentum crucis*, goes back to his daughter, and tells her that they had been wagging their heads over their inkstands the whole afternoon, without being able to shake out a word. These passages seem to imply a false notion of the difficulty of writing good poetry, which, we imagine, does not lie in the metrical arrangement, or mere form, as is here supposed. When the rules of versification are once settled, and good models given, it is rather easier to express ideas in these regular measures, than to write harmonious prose. The difficulty lies in supplying ‘ the thoughts

that breathe and words that burn.' These are articles which, as *Géronte* in the play says of the five hundred crowns, *ne se trouvent point dans le pas d'un cheval*; and there is great room for choice among the fruits of even the finest intellect. 'Good poetry,' says Gray, 'requires the best talents, and the best of those talents.' It must flow with ease, and at the same time exhibit the vigor of thought or imagination and the finished style, all which supposes labor, meditation, and reflection. This was the opinion of Boileau, when he boasted that he had taught Molière to write easy verses with difficulty; *Je lui ai appris l'art de faire difficilement des vers faciles*. When a person writes with great rapidity, or, in other words, sets down his ideas as fast as they occur to him, without study or selection, it is certain, whatever may be his talent, that his work cannot be of the first order. In general your easy writing, as was well observed by the author of the 'School for Scandal,' is the hardest reading a man can undertake.

To return however from this digression; our hero, while engaged in writing his inscription in the garden, hears a person say aloud, in a pavilion placed in the garden adjoining and overlooking his, that the pomegranate-trees without the wall are in full bloom. This was of course a strong temptation to the flowery fancy of a Chinese; and as soon as he has finished his work, Sa walks out to see the show, in which he is at first rather disappointed, but soon penetrates the real meaning of the remark, when he finds himself accosted by a handsome youth, who issues from a door in the wall of the adjoining garden, and who proves to be no other than Dream-of-a-Pear-tree in disguise. If Red-Jasper hold the post of heroine, this visionary beauty has, we suspect, the whole heart of our author, though he allows her only half of that of his hero. He describes her on this her first appearance in the following terms.

'The gate was seen to open, and there came out a youth of about fifteen or sixteen years of age, dressed in a violet robe with a light cap on his head. His vermilion lips, brilliant white teeth, and arched eyebrows gave him the air of a charming girl. So graceful and airy are his movements, that one might well ask, whether he be mortal or a heavenly spirit. He looks like a sylph formed of the essence of flowers, or a soul descended from the moon. Is it indeed a youth who has come out to divert himself, or is it a sweet perfume from the inner apartment?'

This charming person enters into a long conversation with our hero, which gradually assumes a confidential character. Sa acquaints his new companion with his engagement to Mademoiselle Pa (as Mr Remusat generally styles the young lady), who proves to be a cousin of the supposed youth before him. The latter, on hearing of the engagement, remarks that the empire is vast, and inquires of Sa what he would do, if he should find in the course of his travels another damsel equally remarkable for grace, beauty, and poetical talent with his mistress. To this point-blank question Sa very naturally replies, that he has but one heart; which in English would probably be understood to mean, that his affections were preoccupied, and that he could not do justice to the merit of any other object; but being interpreted *à la Chinoise*, implies, that he cannot be insensible to beauty wherever he meets with it, and that if he should become acquainted with another young lady as lovely as Miss Pa, he should of course love her as much. 'If such be the case,' rejoins the youth, 'I may venture to inform you, that I have a younger sister about sixteen years of age, who was in the pavilion yesterday while you were writing, and was so much struck with your agreeable person and dexterity in handling the pencil, that she fairly lost her heart upon the spot. I easily discovered her inclinations, and as we are orphans, and have no friends to provide for our establishment in the regular way, I took it upon me to sound you on the subject; but since your affections are elsewhere engaged, it were better perhaps to think no more about the matter.' In answer to this, Sa proposes the expedient of a double marriage, which appears to be satisfactory to the other party; and it is then arranged, that he shall proceed to the capital, as he originally intended, and after settling the preliminaries of his alliance with Miss Pa, shall call at Canton on his way back, and conclude the arrangement with Miss *Lo*, who, as the intelligent reader does not require to be informed, has been treating for herself under the name of her sister. She very generously insists upon supplying our hero with funds for his journey; and thus provided, he departs at once without stopping to take leave of the owner of the screens.

In the mean time his new mistress, who seems to have a fund of enterprise and vivacity in her character, without waiting for her lover's return, sets off with her mother for Nankin upon a visit to her cousin. The ladies are very cordially re-

ceived, and immediately domesticated in Pa's family. The merit of the fair Peartree is soon brought to the usual test, and she is found to possess a talent for poetry little if at all inferior to that of her relation. The two cousins gradually contract a great liking for each other, and in order to avoid being separated at any future period, determine that they will, if possible, arrange matters so as to marry the same man. Their dialogue on this occasion may be quoted as a favorable specimen of the style of the work, as well as a curious illustration of the sentiments of the Chinese on this subject. Peartree has just produced a copy of verses in praise of her cousin, who is so much delighted with them, that she exclaims,

“What a charming piece of poetry! It is worthy of the most celebrated ancient writers. Ah, sweet coz, how happy I should be, if I could hope to keep you near me all my life. I would have you, if I could, as close to me as my head-dress.”

“Why do you say if you could? sister,” said Peartree in reply; “do you think of sending me away from you? This is but a poor proof of the affection you profess.”

“You misunderstand me, my sweet Peartree,” said Jasper, laughing. “I have the greatest affection for your person, and the highest opinion of your talent. I would gladly, as I have just said, pass my whole life with you; but I fear that it is not possible, and this fear is the only reason of the sentiment I expressed. Why then should you doubt my affection?”

“Does it not depend exclusively upon us,” said Peartree, “to decide whether we shall pass our lives together or not? If we both wish it, who is to prevent it? What can render it impossible?”

“My fear is,” replied Jasper, “that you may not really desire it.”

“Nay, then,” said Peartree, resuming her good humor, “I can have no doubt of your affection, and I am sure that mine for you is unutterable. But you know the condition upon which only we can hope to live together for life; is it to your taste?”

“We are told,” replied Jasper, “that Ohoang and Niuying devoted themselves of yore to the single Chun. Were it agreeable to you, my sweet Peartree, I would willingly imitate them.”

“If such had not been my desire,” replied the other, greatly delighted, “I should not now be here.”

“If these celebrated ancient heroines, Ying and Hoang, with whom we can of course make no pretensions to be compared for beauty and talent, did not blush at such a union,” continued Jasper, “I know not why we should feel any delicacy about it. But

how is it possible to find a person, on whom we can both place our affections?"

"My dear coz," said Peartree, after a moment's reflection, "you permit me to share your confidence; why should we conceal anything from each other?"

"Surely," answered Jasper, "I can have no secrets for you."

"Let me ask you, then, my sweet Jasper, whether the youth who has already won your heart be a person of so little merit, that we need to look farther?"

"The youth who has already won my heart?" replied Jasper, laughing, "what can you possibly mean, my dear Peartree? How can you be so absurd as to think that I care for one young man more than another? And were there even any foundation for such a story, which I am far from admitting, how could it possibly have come to your knowledge?"

"My fair coz," said Peartree, with a loud laugh, "if you wish your secret not to be known, believe me, the only way is not to have any. The most trifling actions of a great poet or a pretty woman are matters of public curiosity, and become the subject of general conversation. Far as I live from here, I have long been informed of all this business."

"Since you are so well informed, then," replied Jasper, who rather doubted the correctness of her cousin's assertion, "let us know what you have heard. Perhaps it is something about the adventure of Chang-Fanju and the verses on the *Willow-tree*?"

"Nay," said Peartree, still laughing, "that everybody knows. I am not alluding to Chang, who attempted to obtain the credit of having written the poem on the *Willow-tree*, but to a certain young gentleman named Sa, who was the real author of that poem, and also of the *Salutation to the Swallow*."

"At this remark, which evidently showed a knowledge of her most private sentiments, poor Jasper was at first so much confused, that she could not articulate a word; but looked in utter amazement at Yanson, as if to ask whether she had betrayed the secret.

"Why this embarrassment? my sweet cousin," said Peartree, "are we not sisters? why should we conceal anything from each other?"

"I know you to be a shrewd girl," said Jasper, perceiving, after a moment's hesitation, that it was useless to dissemble; "but how you have discovered this affair, I am sure I cannot imagine. I have not lisped a syllable of it to any one but Yanson; nor ventured so much as to dream about it for fear of betraying myself. Is it possible that one of my women can have played the spy and tell-tale?"

"Nay, nay," said Peartree, "make yourself easy on that score,

my fair cousin. Your adventure is a secret, for aught I know, from your very guardian spirit. But there is one person who was of course acquainted with it, and who related it to me with his own mouth; I mean young Sa himself. I dare swear no one else is privy to the matter."

"Nay, coz," said Jasper, "you are surely jesting. It is nearly a year since Sa left us. My father has sent to inquire after him in all quarters, and can hear nothing about him. Supposing him to be at Canton, how could he possibly communicate with you, a young and pretty girl confined to the female apartment?"

"Your question is natural enough," replied Peartree, "but certain it is that I saw young Sa, and that we talked of his engagement with you. I have not the most remote intention of deceiving you."

"And yet," said Jasper, "what you say is neither natural nor probable. How can you expect me to believe it?"

"Believe it or not, as you please," replied her cousin; "the gentleman himself, when you see him again, will at all events assure you that I speak the truth."

"Alas!" said Jasper, "there is but little chance of our meeting again. After all the fruitless researches, which my father has made to obtain news of him, I have but too much reason to fear that he has forgotten me."

"Forgotten you, my dear Jasper?" said Peartree, in reply, "why 'tis for the very purpose of arranging his marriage with you, that he is now travelling about in all directions, without allowing himself a moment's repose or comfort. How can you speak with so much levity of this most excellent and exemplary young man? He distinguished himself very much last autumn at the Northern Examination."

"It was he, then," said Jasper, a little surprised, "who obtained the second place upon the list. How happens it that he was described as a candidate from Honan?"

"The reason was," replied Peartree, "that his uncle, the inspector general, is a native of Honan. He has recently adopted his nephew, and the latter of course belongs at present to that province."

"Since, then, he has obtained the promotion he desired," said Jasper, "why does he not return to fulfil his engagement with me? How happens it that we have not the least intelligence from him?"

"He is waiting, I imagine," replied Peartree, "until he obtains the highest rank of all. Have a little patience, my sweet coz, and he will make you a doctor's lady."

"You speak with such an air of sincerity, my dear sister," said Jasper, "that I am bound to believe you; and it is certain

that you could not have obtained from any other person the information you possess. But how a young girl like you, shut up in the female apartment, should have been able to converse with an entire stranger, I am wholly unable to imagine. If you love me, relate the whole affair to me in detail, before I die of curiosity."

"After all that has passed," said Peartree, "I can do no otherwise; but for Heaven's sake, sweet coz, spare your rail-lery."

"Nay," said Jasper, "my communications here in the female apartment were something still more singular than your adventure, and will of course close my mouth upon the subject."

"Well, then," said Peartree, "since you promise to be merciful, I will e'en tell you all. You must know, then, that after parting from you last year, young Sa was proceeding to the capital in order to arrange with your uncle Gu the preliminaries of his marriage with you. As he was passing through Canton, he was attacked by robbers, and plundered of everything he had with him. In this emergency, he luckily made acquaintance with a certain Counsellor Li, living in the house next to ours, who engaged him to compose the inscriptions for some screens, which he was preparing, and for this purpose gave him for the time a lodging at the bottom of his garden. I happened to be looking out of the summer-house in ours, as he was writing; and was so much struck by his noble air, and the facility with which he managed his pencil, that I knew he must be a poet of great merit. Orphan, as I was, without father or brothers to provide for my establishment, was I obliged to observe to the letter all the ordinary rules, and remain unmarried for life? Do not think too hardly of me, my dear cousin, if I confess to you, that I ventured to deviate from them in this extreme case, and putting on a man's dress, had a personal interview with Sa without the garden gate."

"Well done, Peartree!" said Jasper, struck with astonishment, and at the same time highly gratified with this account. "So young, and so much wit and resolution! You are really a heroine! But, cousin, how came he to speak of his engagement to me? This young student of ours must be a great babbler."

"Not at all," replied Peartree; "he is, I assure you, a model of discretion. But you must recollect, that I made proposals to him to marry my sister, that is, myself; and when he repeatedly declined, and I as often insisted upon knowing his objection, he had no resource left, but to inform me of his engagement with you. He concluded, of course, that I could have no concern in an affair that happened a thousand miles off, and was far from dreaming that he was talking to me about my own cousin. Provi-

dence, my dear sister, seems to have interposed specially, in order to manage this matter in the way most favorable to our happiness."

"And what," inquired Jasper, "did you finally agree upon?"

"When I found that he was under a prior engagement," replied Peartree, "which nothing would induce him to relinquish, and saw that he was a young man of a firm and steady character, I proposed to him, always speaking as if for my sister, the expedient of a double marriage. As he appeared to be satisfied with this, I next resolved to remove to this place with my mother, in order to ascertain your wishes, and complete the arrangement if it should prove agreeable to you. The warm and tender attachment which I have since formed for you, my sweet sister, makes the connexion appear ten times more delightful to me than I had expected. Heaven has surely interposed in a visible manner in our behalf."

"You are a charming creature, my sweet Peartree, and have quite cleared up the mystery that covered the proceedings of Sa, and explained them in the most satisfactory manner. If we do but complete the arrangement, I will acknowledge you for a greater heroine than any one on record."

It will be observed, that although the form of the marriage here treated of be different from that in use with us, and the tone of the conversation sportive and lively, the parties observe the same perfect decorum which is usual in reference to the same subject, in the polished societies of the western world. Indeed, the work before us is so far from approaching in any part to undue freedom of thought or expression, that it supposes and exemplifies throughout, a degree of reserve in the ordinary intercourse of the sexes, which appears, when judged by our notions, excessive and ridiculous. The reader will agree with us, we think, in considering the above passage as a favorable specimen of the author's talent for easy and spirited dialogue, which is, after all, the principal attraction in the domestic novel. The characters of the young ladies are also discriminated with some degree of delicacy, and correspond pretty nearly with those of *Caroline* and *Rosamond* in Miss Edgeworth's 'Patronage';—Jasper, all perfection; Peartree, perfection alloyed and made more interesting by a few grains of *étourderie*. The above dialogue resembles in tone those of *Celia* and *Rosalind* in Shakspeare's 'As you like it,' and partly coincides in the turn of thought, with that which passes between *Portia* and *Nerissa* and their husbands in the 'Merchant of Ven-

ice,' at the close of the fifth act. We have taken the liberty of employing an abridged translation of the names of the ladies, as a method of escaping from the stiffness of the Chinese nomenclature, and giving the conversation a natural air, in preference to the plan adopted by M. Remusat, of affixing to the original family name the terms of address in use with us. *Miss Pa* and *Miss Lo* would appear in English like decided burlesque ; while the names, as translated, being of a slightly comic cast, are, in this respect, in keeping with the tone of the dialogue, and tend to heighten rather than diminish its effect. We perceive, however, that we are approaching the extent of our limits, and must hurry rapidly over the rest of the narrative.

The reader will have gathered from the contents of the above dialogue, that the hero of the novel, after parting from the second heroine, meets with his uncle, the inspector general, is adopted by him, and then proceeds to the capital to pursue his studies. He there distinguishes himself as usual, obtains at the general examination the thirteenth place on the list of the doctors, and, at the final one before the emperor, comes out at the head of one of the two classes of these dignitaries. This rank gives him the right of entering the *Jasper Hall*, and mounting the *Golden Horse*, or, in plain language of being admitted into the Imperial Academy of Sciences ; a distinction which also regularly carries with it an appointment to one of the great offices at court. But by the intrigues of some powerful friends of the disappointed candidates, he does not receive the promotion properly due to his success, and only obtains an appointment of judge in a remote province. Without, however, making any difficulty on the subject, he sets off pretty soon to take possession of his place, calling on his way first at Honan to offer sacrifice at the burial-place of his ancestors, and afterwards successively at Canton and Nankin to arrange his marriage with his two wives. Unluckily he is disappointed in meeting with both. Dream-of-a-Pear-tree, as the reader is aware, had left Canton, and no one there could give the least account where she had gone. She had herself sent a messenger to Sa, to inform him, whom he had missed by crossing him on the road. Proceeding thence to Nankin, he finds that Pa has gone upon an excursion of pleasure to the Western Lake. During his absence, no access can of course be had to the family. Having no leisure time upon his hands to make farther inquiries at the moment, he reluctantly continues his journey to his

place of destination, where he finds himself acting immediately under our old acquaintance, the inspector general Yang, who now reappears in his former capacity as the villain of the plot.

As soon as Yang perceives the extraordinary merit of our hero, he pitches upon him for his son-in-law ; and when the latter declines the proposal on the score of his previous engagement to Red-Jasper, Yang circulates a false report of her death. Sa, however, is too much distressed at this event, to think of another marriage ; and Yang thus failing entirely in his purpose, begins to persecute the young judge in such a way, that he resigns his place in disgust, and sets off to refresh himself upon an excursion to the Western Lake. Here he falls in with Pa, and makes acquaintance with him ; but as both had assumed feigned names and characters in order to travel with more freedom, they meet as perfect strangers. After talking literature and making poetry together for a few days over their cups, they gradually get upon a confidential footing, and let each other into the secret of their respective family affairs. It soon appears that Mademoiselle Pa is not dead, that Dream-of-a-Pear-tree is residing with her at the old gentleman's, that the latter is as anxious for the marriage as any of the parties, and that there is now nothing to prevent it. In the mean time, the intrigue at the capital by which Sa lost his regular promotion is discovered, and he is permitted to mount the Golden Horse without any further delay. Everything being thus arranged to the general satisfaction, the marriage takes place, and as usual, closes the novel.

Such is the outline of the fable of this very curious work. We have omitted, of course, all the secondary and episodic parts, in particular, the whole machinery of divination, which is used with a good deal of freedom, and exercises considerable influence in the knitting up and unravelling of the plot. From this abstract, however imperfect, of the contents of the novel, the intelligent reader will see at once how much light it must necessarily throw upon the domestic and political economy of the vast empire in which the scene is laid, and may conjecture what stores of information will probably result from future researches into the same mine that has furnished this specimen. We are prevented, by want of room, from entering at much length into a commentary upon the state of civilization in China, as indicated by the work before us ; and must reserve

most of the remarks which occur to us upon the subject, for some other occasion.

We may observe, in general, that the condition of society in this remote quarter of the globe seems to resemble that, which exists among ourselves, more nearly than has hitherto been supposed ; and that the points of difference (which are nevertheless considerable) are not, in all respects, (though they certainly are in some very important ones) to our advantage. As regards the leading principles of domestic economy and the intercourse between the sexes, the Chinese are doubly unfortunate in the allowance of polygamy on the one hand, and the unnecessary restrictions imposed upon ordinary and harmless conversation on the other. The system that prevails on this subject in all the Christian countries, though strictly conformable to nature, and apparently the one that would suggest itself most readily to every correct mind, has never been adopted in any other part of the world, and is doubtless one of the circumstances that have contributed most powerfully to the progress of civilization in Europe ; as it was itself, on the other hand, the effect of the general influence, upon all classes of the community, of our pure and sublime religion. In some other principal features in the aspect of domestic life, the deep veneration of children for their parents, the warmth and tenderness of all the family relations, and the universal polish and softness of manners, we might perhaps with advantage take some lessons from the natives of the Celestial Empire.

Their political institutions, which have been hitherto but little examined, are, as we hinted above, well worth the attention and study of philosophers ; and might perhaps furnish useful suggestions for the improvement of governments founded in the main on other principles. The constitution of the Chinese empire, instead of being, as is commonly supposed, an absolute and unmitigated despotism, in which the only element of power is the cudgel, is evidently one of the most popular forms of government that has ever existed ; and although the mode of bringing the will of the people into action be different from the one in use with us, we are not compelled to conclude without examination, that it is therefore necessarily bad. The difference of form renders each system, on the contrary, a more interesting and useful object of study, to those who are familiar with the other.

As intellectual accomplishments are apparently much more

important and valuable to their possessor, and as civilization is also of much older date, in China than in Europe, it appears singular that the Chinese should not have carried the sciences to a higher degree of perfection, and should be in this respect decidedly inferior, as there is reason to suppose they are, especially in the mathematical and physical departments, to the western world. With our present scanty information respecting their institutions, situation, and manners, it would be idle to attempt to assign any precise reason for this inferiority. We may venture perhaps to conjecture, that the vast political importance attached to learning, may have turned the current of zeal and industry almost wholly into the channel of moral and political studies, which are those immediately required as preparatory for the public service, and have led to the comparative neglect of all other branches of learning. Civil polity, we know, is habitually spoken of by the Chinese as the *great science*, or, in their own phrase, *the highway*; and as it seems, at any rate, to be the one which leads to the possession of wealth, rank, and beauty, it is not very surprising that the majority should regularly follow it. But on this, as on all other points connected with the subject, we must wait for the fruits of further researches before we can speculate with much satisfaction, or draw conclusions with any great degree of probability.
